

Assembly Bill No. 475

CHAPTER 390

An act to amend Section 851.8 of the Penal Code, relating to criminal procedure.

[Approved by Governor October 10, 2007. Filed with
Secretary of State October 10, 2007.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 475, Emmerson. Criminal procedure: motions.

Existing law requires a person seeking to have a court order the record of his or her arrest destroyed to serve a copy of the petition on the prosecuting attorney of the county or city having jurisdiction over the offense.

This bill would require the petitioner to also serve a copy of the petition on the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense and would allow the law enforcement agency to present evidence at the motion through the district attorney.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 851.8 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

851.8. (a) In any case where a person has been arrested and no accusatory pleading has been filed, the person arrested may petition the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense to destroy its records of the arrest. A copy of the petition shall be served upon the prosecuting attorney of the county or city having jurisdiction over the offense. The law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense, upon a determination that the person arrested is factually innocent, shall, with the concurrence of the prosecuting attorney, seal its arrest records, and the petition for relief under this section for three years from the date of the arrest and thereafter destroy its arrest records and the petition. The law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense shall notify the Department of Justice, and any law enforcement agency that arrested the petitioner or participated in the arrest of the petitioner for an offense for which the petitioner has been found factually innocent under this subdivision, of the sealing of the arrest records and the reason therefor. The Department of Justice and any law enforcement agency so notified shall forthwith seal their records of the arrest and the notice of sealing for three years from the date of the arrest, and thereafter destroy their records of the arrest and the notice of sealing. The law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense and the Department of Justice shall request the destruction of any

records of the arrest which they have given to any local, state, or federal agency or to any other person or entity. Each agency, person, or entity within the State of California receiving the request shall destroy its records of the arrest and the request, unless otherwise provided in this section.

(b) If, after receipt by both the law enforcement agency and the prosecuting attorney of a petition for relief under subdivision (a), the law enforcement agency and prosecuting attorney do not respond to the petition by accepting or denying the petition within 60 days after the running of the relevant statute of limitations or within 60 days after receipt of the petition in cases where the statute of limitations has previously lapsed, then the petition shall be deemed to be denied. In any case where the petition of an arrestee to the law enforcement agency to have an arrest record destroyed is denied, petition may be made to the superior court that would have had territorial jurisdiction over the matter. A copy of the petition shall be served on the law enforcement agency and the prosecuting attorney of the county or city having jurisdiction over the offense at least 10 days prior to the hearing thereon. The prosecuting attorney and the law enforcement agency through the district attorney may present evidence to the court at the hearing. Notwithstanding Section 1538.5 or 1539, any judicial determination of factual innocence made pursuant to this section may be heard and determined upon declarations, affidavits, police reports, or any other evidence submitted by the parties which is material, relevant and reliable. A finding of factual innocence and an order for the sealing and destruction of records pursuant to this section shall not be made unless the court finds that no reasonable cause exists to believe that the arrestee committed the offense for which the arrest was made. In any court hearing to determine the factual innocence of a party, the initial burden of proof shall rest with the petitioner to show that no reasonable cause exists to believe that the arrestee committed the offense for which the arrest was made. If the court finds that this showing of no reasonable cause has been made by the petitioner, then the burden of proof shall shift to the respondent to show that a reasonable cause exists to believe that the petitioner committed the offense for which the arrest was made. If the court finds the arrestee to be factually innocent of the charges for which the arrest was made, then the court shall order the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense, the Department of Justice, and any law enforcement agency which arrested the petitioner or participated in the arrest of the petitioner for an offense for which the petitioner has been found factually innocent under this section to seal their records of the arrest and the court order to seal and destroy the records, for three years from the date of the arrest and thereafter to destroy their records of the arrest and the court order to seal and destroy such records. The court shall also order the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense and the Department of Justice to request the destruction of any records of the arrest which they have given to any local, state, or federal agency, person or entity. Each state or local agency, person or entity within the State of California receiving such a request shall destroy its records of the arrest and the request to destroy the records, unless otherwise provided in this section. The court shall give

to the petitioner a copy of any court order concerning the destruction of the arrest records.

(c) In any case where a person has been arrested, and an accusatory pleading has been filed, but where no conviction has occurred, the defendant may, at any time after dismissal of the action, petition the court that dismissed the action for a finding that the defendant is factually innocent of the charges for which the arrest was made. A copy of the petition shall be served on the prosecuting attorney of the county or city in which the accusatory pleading was filed at least 10 days prior to the hearing on the petitioner's factual innocence. The prosecuting attorney may present evidence to the court at the hearing. The hearing shall be conducted as provided in subdivision (b). If the court finds the petitioner to be factually innocent of the charges for which the arrest was made, then the court shall grant the relief as provided in subdivision (b).

(d) In any case where a person has been arrested and an accusatory pleading has been filed, but where no conviction has occurred, the court may, with the concurrence of the prosecuting attorney, grant the relief provided in subdivision (b) at the time of the dismissal of the accusatory pleading.

(e) Whenever any person is acquitted of a charge and it appears to the judge presiding at the trial at which the acquittal occurred that the defendant was factually innocent of the charge, the judge may grant the relief provided in subdivision (b).

(f) In any case where a person who has been arrested is granted relief pursuant to subdivision (a) or (b), the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense or court shall issue a written declaration to the arrestee stating that it is the determination of the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense or court that the arrestee is factually innocent of the charges for which the person was arrested and that the arrestee is thereby exonerated. Thereafter, the arrest shall be deemed not to have occurred and the person may answer accordingly any question relating to its occurrence.

(g) The Department of Justice shall furnish forms to be utilized by persons applying for the destruction of their arrest records and for the written declaration that one person was found factually innocent under subdivisions (a) and (b).

(h) Documentation of arrest records destroyed pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) that are contained in investigative police reports shall bear the notation "Exonerated" whenever reference is made to the arrestee. The arrestee shall be notified in writing by the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense of the sealing and destruction of the arrest records pursuant to this section.

(i) Any finding that an arrestee is factually innocent pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) shall not be admissible as evidence in any action.

(j) Destruction of records of arrest pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) shall be accomplished by permanent obliteration of all entries or

notations upon the records pertaining to the arrest, and the record shall be prepared again so that it appears that the arrest never occurred. However, where (1) the only entries on the record pertain to the arrest and (2) the record can be destroyed without necessarily affecting the destruction of other records, then the document constituting the record shall be physically destroyed.

(k) No records shall be destroyed pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) if the arrestee or a codefendant has filed a civil action against the peace officers or law enforcement jurisdiction which made the arrest or instituted the prosecution and if the agency which is the custodian of the records has received a certified copy of the complaint in the civil action, until the civil action has been resolved. Any records sealed pursuant to this section by the court in the civil actions, upon a showing of good cause, may be opened and submitted into evidence. The records shall be confidential and shall be available for inspection only by the court, jury, parties, counsel for the parties and any other person authorized by the court. Immediately following the final resolution of the civil action, records subject to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) shall be sealed and destroyed pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e).

(l) For arrests occurring on or after January 1, 1981, and for accusatory pleadings filed on or after January 1, 1981, petitions for relief under this section may be filed up to two years from the date of the arrest or filing of the accusatory pleading, whichever is later. Until January 1, 1983, petitioners can file for relief under this section for arrests which occurred or accusatory pleadings which were filed up to five years prior to the effective date of the statute. Any time restrictions on filing for relief under this section may be waived upon a showing of good cause by the petitioner and in the absence of prejudice.

(m) Any relief which is available to a petitioner under this section for an arrest shall also be available for an arrest which has been deemed to be or described as a detention under Section 849.5 or 851.6.

(n) This section shall not apply to any offense which is classified as an infraction.

(o) (1) This section shall be repealed on the effective date of a final judgment based on a claim under the California or United States Constitution holding that evidence that is relevant, reliable, and material may not be considered for purposes of a judicial determination of factual innocence under this section. For purposes of this subdivision, a judgment by the appellate division of a superior court is a final judgment if it is published and if it is not reviewed on appeal by a court of appeal. A judgment of a court of appeal is a final judgment if it is published and if it is not reviewed by the California Supreme Court.

(2) Any decision referred to in this subdivision shall be stayed pending appeal.

(3) If not otherwise appealed by a party to the action, any decision referred to in this subdivision which is a judgment by the appellate division of the superior court shall be appealed by the Attorney General.

(p) A judgment of the court under subdivision (b), (c), (d), or (e) is subject to the following appeal path:

- (1) In a felony case, appeal is to the court of appeal.
- (2) In a misdemeanor case, or in a case in which no accusatory pleading was filed, appeal is to the appellate division of the superior court.